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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SARAJEVO 001863

SIPDIS

FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROGER ZAKHEIM

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
DEFENSE ROGER ZAKHEIM

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Classified By: Amb. Charles English for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Your visit comes days after the last of Bosnia's deployments to Iraq have returned. Although Bosnia's Tri-presidency will ultimately make any decision about a new deployment to ISAF/OEF, Bosnia's defense institutions are keen to contribute however they can, and the broad political will exists across party lines to participate in overseas peacekeeping missions. Along with EU membership, NATO accession is one of the two uniting goals of a divided Bosnia. Despite a deteriorating political situation, all major leaders are eager to demonstrate Bosnia's commitment to collective security as well as develop the armed forces by participating in overseas missions. Bosnian officials want to be asked to contribute to ISAF, as the Ministry of Defense will feel it is outside its mandate to propose a deployment to the Presidency of its own initiative. Your arrival comes on the eve of a visit by the National Guard Bureau including GEN McKinley, Chief NGB, and BG Adkins, The Adjutant General of Maryland -- Bosnia and Herzegovina's State Partner. END SUMMARY.

YOUR MEETINGS

12. (C/NF) During your visit, Bosnia's armed forces will host a return ceremony for the last EOD rotation and 49 infantry soldiers who served in Iraq, to which they will invite Chairman (and Bosnian-Serb member) of the Presidency Nebojsa Radmanovic. You will have a separate meeting with Chief of Defense General Milojcic, and Minister of Defense Selmo Cikotic at the site of the ceremony. You will also meet leadership of Parliament's Defense and Security Committee, who will have to approve any deployment abroad. We expect all to be broadly supportive of making a contribution to ISAF/OEF. With all your interlocutors, we suggest the following points:

-- Thanks. Bosnia's contribution of one infantry and eight EOD rotations in Iraq was significant and successful. It showed Bosnia's commitment to collective security and ability to operate a professional and unified armed forces.

-- The new SOFA with Iraq has led to an unanticipated availability of forces that Bosnia can contribute to international peacekeeping missions. This gives Bosnia the opportunity to contribute to an ongoing NATO mission at a critical juncture in Bosnia's NATO process.

-- We are in a position to help Bosnia fulfill its mission to ISAF/OEF, by rolling over Coalition Support Funds towards an

ISAF/OEF mission, joint training and deployment through the State Partnership Program with the Maryland National Guard, and ongoing Mil-Mil assistance through our FMF and IMET programs.

ISAF/OEF CONTRIBUTION: POSSIBLE AND DESIRABLE

13. (C) We believe that a Bosnian contribution to ISAF/OEF is politically feasible and desirable. We have already discussed the possibility in general terms with Bosnia's leaders, and we do not foresee any strong objections. Defense institutions will be especially supportive as overseas deployment put Bosnia's defense reform goals in focus. Bosnia's nine deployments to Iraq have served as a positive model for the future of their armed forces -- a small, NATO inter-operable and completely ethnically integrated force focused on providing support for international missions. It's also a back-door means of integrating Bosnia's military, as we have successfully pressed the Bosnians to ensure that all overseas deployments be multi-ethnic. (Although defense reform integrated the Armed Forces command structure, the infantry remains ethnically segregated at the battalion level.) The foreign deployment of a company would effectively create an integrated battalion in the BiH Armed Forces, because of the need to train a reserve and a follow-up company.

OPTIONS

14. (C/NF) Bosnia's current institutional capacity for working with NATO is weak. Bosnia has not adequately staffed its mission to NATO/SHAPE, although the positions will be filled in early 2009. The Ministry of Defense will likely look to us

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for instructions throughout the deployment process. Bosnia's defense leaders are eager for a "request" that they contribute to ISAF, and they will likely want to be told what to contribute. While we stress that it is ultimately up to the Government of BiH, we have spoken to them generally about the following possibilities:

--EOD unit. Bosnia has deployed eight EOD unit rotations to Iraq, and they are largely trained and equipped and could probably deploy most quickly of any of the other options. The EOD unit is part of the de-mining battalion, and sending company size deployment would require training and equipping the entire battalion.

--Infantry Company for fixed site security. Bosnia's first rotation of a platoon plus (49 personnel) of infantry for fixed site security has just returned from Iraq. Even though there will be no more Iraq rotations, the Armed Forces has continued its training rotation of 78 infantry men for peacekeeping operations in anticipation of future contributions.

--Military Police deployment along with Maryland National Guard (Bosnia's partner in the State Partnership Program) as an operational mentor and liaison team (OMLT). OMLTs coach, teach, and mentor Afghan National Army (ANA) units. They also assist in planning and execution of operations, facilitate ANA cooperation with ISAF partners, and coordinate and integrate ISAF enablers.

BACKGROUND ON POLITICAL SITUATION

15. (C/NF) Despite Bosnia's having achieved formal progress in its path toward candidacy for the EU and NATO, the political situation in Bosnia continues to be problematic. Political leaders continue to engage in destabilizing dialogue among themselves and often focus their time and energy on the issues that divide the country rather than on those that could bring it together. Around the time of October's

municipal elections, Serbs were speculating about the "peaceful separation" of Republika Srpska (RS), the Croats were openly calling for creation of a third entity, and Bosniak leaders were advocating constitutional reforms that would abolish the RS. There has been a recent (fragile) compromise between three major parties on some of Bosnia's key outstanding issues, but it is hard to judge its value until the parties make concrete progress. Defense reforms of two years ago are still a bright spot, but much of the progress we achieved there has required robust U.S. and NATO engagement and nevertheless remains fragile. Not surprisingly, in this environment there has been little scope for politicians to reach meaningful agreements that would advance Bosnia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. As a consequence, the reform process, including the next steps in defense reform, has stalled.

Defense Reform: Fragile Progress, More to Do

16. (C) Defense reform remains one of the biggest success stories in Bosnia since Dayton. Since abolishing the two entity-level militaries and ministries of defense and creating a single state institution in their place in 2005, Bosnia has taken the first steps to create a unified, effective military. The government has developed a clear and direct ethnically integrated command and control structure, and with active U.S. support and engagement, a legally consistent and transparent way to manage the transition of the Joint Chief of Staff. The new state-level institutions met the conditions for PfP membership in 2006 and for an Intensified Dialogue in April 2008. Nonetheless, there remains much work to be done, and many reforms will require engagement of state institutions other than the Ministry of Defense, a point lost on much of the Bosnian government.

NATO Aspirations: Substance Matters

17. (C) Since being invited to join PfP in 2006 (and reinforced by the invitation to join Intensified Dialogue at Bucharest), NATO membership has been, along with EU membership, one of the two uniting goals of a divided country. Most Bosnians believe NATO membership is absolutely necessary for their country's long-term peace and prosperity, and many believe it within reach. The government's stated

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objective is a Membership Action Plan (MAP) by NATO's next summit, and some are hoping for an invitation to join by that time. This overly optimistic prognosis is indicative of a broad lack of understanding of the implications and requirements of NATO membership. As a result, we are confronted with the delicate task of keeping the Bosnians motivated, while simultaneously injecting a dose of realism into the discussions. There has been little public discussion about what the path forward entails, particularly the necessity of reform across the board, including in civilian institutions. We take every opportunity to underscore to our interlocutors that NATO membership is earned, and that this requires a sustained commitment to reforms across the board.

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